

N.M. VETERANS NEWSLETTER

U.S. SENATOR MARTIN HEINRICH



SPRING 2018

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

FOR NEW MEXICO'S VETERANS



May 2018

DEAR FRIEND,

One of my most important duties as a senator is to help New Mexico's veterans and their families. We need to make sure our veterans receive both the recognition and the care that they earned through their service.

This month, I'm looking forward to joining with communities across New Mexico on Memorial Day to pause and reflect on countless stories of personal sacrifice, perseverance, and patriotism that should never be forgotten

Our ability to maintain the strongest and most dedicated military force in the world depends on our nation's ability to keep its promises to provide our veterans the best care, benefits, and opportunities they earned. I am committed to keeping America's promise to our heroic veterans and their families so that they receive the benefits they have earned.

If you or someone in your family is experiencing difficulties receiving service medals or veterans services, please contact my office. I hope you enjoy the Spring 2018 edition of my Veterans Newsletter.

Sincerely,



MARTIN HEINRICH
United States Senator



NAVAJO CODE TALKER CONGRESSIONAL

PHOTO: Medal Ceremony, April 2018

New Mexicans have a long and storied history of protecting our nation and the Navajo Code Talkers are a major part of that history. We all owe a great debt of gratitude to the Navajo Code Talkers. These brave men developed an unbreakable code with the Diné language that helped win the war in the Pacific during World War II. The Code Talkers' unbreakable code has been credited with saving thousands of American GIs.

In April, I was honored to present Benjamin Nagurski with his late father's Code Talker Congressional Silver Medal. I worked to authorize the approval and release of Adolph Nagurski's prestigious medal so his family could finally receive the proper recognition for his incredible service to our nation.

Adolph enlisted to protect his nation, his homeland, and secure the freedom we enjoy today. He saw action in Okinawa, a battle that lasted over 80 days.



SILVER MEDAL CEREMONY

PHOTO: Medal Ceremony, April 2018

But when Adolph returned home, his mission remained a secret for 23 years. After the American people knew how important the Code Talkers were to our victory, Congress rightly honored them for their heroism.

Unfortunately, Adolph never received his medal. Back in October Adolph's son, Benjamin Nagurski contacted me and asked for my help in getting his dad's Navajo Code Talker Congressional Silver Medal. His father, who is no longer with us, was supposed to receive this prestigious medal at a ceremony for Code Talkers in Window Rock back in 2001 -- but because of health issues, he was unable to attend. The medal had been authorized by Congress and struck by the U.S. Mint to recognize the Navajo Code Talker's immense contribution to winning the war against Japan.

I was honored to present this long overdue medal to Adolph Nagurski's family to recognize his service to our nation.

HOMELESS VETERANS HOUSING PROGRAM GRANTS

I welcomed the recent announcement that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs granted \$351,160 to support New Mexico's HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUDVASH) Program. These new housing resources will help change the lives of our former service members and provide them with the assistance they deserve to get back on their feet.



PHOTO: Mesilla Valley Community of Hope Veteran Homelessness Roundtable In Las Cruces, August 24, 2016

New Mexico agencies awarded federal grant funding:

Albuquerque Housing Authority -- \$101,359
Bernalillo County Housing Authority -- \$124,579
Eastern Regional Housing Authority -- \$83,810
Mesilla Valley Public Housing Authority -- \$42,412

SUPPORTING VETERANS

2018 OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS BILL HIGHLIGHTS

REBUILDING VETERANS' HOSPITALS

The bill includes an additional \$4 billion to be spent in fiscal year 2018 and 2019 for investments in VA infrastructure.

BURN PITS REGISTRY IMPROVEMENT

The bill includes \$5 million to improve the VA's Airborne Hazard and Burn Pit registry. The money is in response to recommendations by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

RURAL HEALTH CARE FOR VETERANS

The bill includes \$270 million for the Rural Health Initiative to expand VA projects aimed at closing gaps in access in rural, highly rural and remote areas. This includes dedicated funding for telehealth programs that improve outcomes in rural areas.

VA ANNOUNCEMENTS

VA STARTS ISSUING NATIONAL VETERANS IDENTIFICATION CARD

In 2015 I supported the Veterans Identification Card Act that paved the way for veterans who are not enrolled in the VA Health Care System to receive a national Veterans Identification Card from the Department of Veterans Affairs. The VA recently announced that the application process for the national Veterans Identification Card is now available. The ID card is available to any veteran who received an honorable discharge, regardless of era or time in service. The card can be used as proof of military service at businesses in lieu of carrying a DD-214. These ID cards do not qualify as official government-issued identification for air travel or other uses. To apply for a card visit vets.gov, if you are eligible for one of these cards and you experience any problems with the VA's application process, please contact my office at 505-346-6601.

VA LAUNCHES AN APPEALS STATUS TOOL

In an attempt to increase transparency and enable veterans to track the progress of their benefits claims appeals, the VA, together with the U.S. Digital Service, launched a new online tool to assist veterans in obtaining status updates on their pending claims appeals. By accessing the tool online at vets.gov, veterans will be able to see their place on the Board of Veterans Appeals docket and how many appeals are ahead of their claim.

TOURING NEW VETERANS CEMETERY SITE



PHOTO: Touring Gallup Veterans Cemetery Site, April 2, 2018

In April, I joined Gallup Mayor Jackie McKinney and Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Hiroshi “Hershey” Miyamura to tour the construction site for the new Gallup Veterans Cemetery.

Currently, the nearest national cemetery to Gallup is located in Santa Fe, approximately 199 miles away. I strongly supported the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs grant of \$6.7 million to provide funding for a new veterans cemetery in Gallup that will provide more convenient access and service to over 19,000 veterans and their families.

In 2015, I participated in the groundbreaking for another new State Veterans’ Cemetery in Fort Stanton. Two additional State Veterans’ Cemeteries are planned for Angel Fire and Carlsbad to serve our state’s large rural veterans’ populations.



EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

PHOTOS: Veterans Day In Gallup, November 2013

SERVICE ACADEMY NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN

Every year, I have the honor of nominating talented young leaders to our military service academies. These opportunities provide exceptional education and training that prepare students for leadership roles in our armed forces as well as the skills needed to succeed after their military service. My office will accept applications from high school students and recent high school graduates seeking a service academy

nomination until the deadline of October 12, 2018. Being nominated is a significant honor and the application process is rigorous. Parents or prospective applicants are encouraged to visit the Academy Nominations page on my website Heinrich.Senate.Gov for application deadlines and more information about the nomination process, or call my office at 505-346-6601.

HOW CAN I HELP YOU?



PHOTO: Memorial Day In Farmington, May 29, 2017

MY OFFICE CAN HELP WITH:

- VA Claims
- Military Records
- Replacement Medals
- GI Bill Benefits
- VA Home Loans
- VA Health Benefits
- Survivor's Benefits

TO START A CASE WITH MY OFFICE:

Call My Office At (505) 346-6601 or fill out the Privacy Release Form on my Website: Heinrich.Senate.Gov



U.S. SENATOR MARTIN HEINRICH

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